

# GLORIA'S ROMANCE

From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name Produced by George Kleine and Featuring Miss Billie Burke

Scenario and Novelization By  
Mr. and Mrs. Rupert Hughes

## THIRD EPISODE A PERILOUS LOVE

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**N**EVER before in all her luxurious young life had Gloria encountered the slightest hardship. The most exquisite of existence had been hers as regularly as the breath she drew. So she had wearied of them and rebelled. And now she had found that adventure was not altogether pleasant, either. A primeval jungle inhabited by a primeval people was, to say the least, distinctly uncomfortable.

It had been a busy day for one young girl. Within twenty-four hours she had stolen her brother's automobile, wrecked it in the waves, explored the Everglades, and endured Indian captivity. She had had her first proposal of marriage—and from an Indian chief! For the first time she had wanted to die. For the first time she had fainted. She was rather proud of that—it was so nice and old-fashioned to faint. Also, she had been rescued—and by such a handsome man! And so modest he was about it!

She had had all these thrilling experiences and there was a happy ending; also a happy future. She believed she was in for a romance. When handsome young men save the lives of young women they have to marry them, don't they? Of course they do. It is absolutely necessary. Anything else is inartistic.

Gloria felt it especially lucky that since she had to be rescued, fate had been polite enough to select a good-looking rescuer for her. The more she studied Mr. Freneau the better she liked him. He had a nice name, too—a nice, marriageable name. The only fly in the ointment was the bad behavior of Dr. Royce. She had thought him charming. But now she sukked and moped. He did not want even to come along back to Palm Beach in the big motor that had brought her father and brother down to the edge of the Everglades. But her father made him get in.

Fortunately there were long dust-coats in the car to cover Gloria's aqua costume and Dr. Royce's disreputable wreck of evening dress. Mr. Freneau was spick and span. He was like a hero in a play or a novel. He could save a heroine from frightful danger and not spot a collar or rumple a cuff.

Dr. Royce was grim because he did not know what to do. He was confronted with a duty that he could not solve. It was like some obscure disease, hard to diagnose.

To speak up and denounce Freneau as a liar and thief was impossible. Royce had no proof that Freneau had played either the cad or the coward. He knew only that Freneau must have seen him battling with the Indian and a decent man would have come to the assistance of a fellow white. Even if Freneau had felt that he ought to put Gloria in the boat first, he might have come back to help Royce. But Freneau had left Royce to his fate. That was ugly.

Royce heard Pierpont Stafford say to Freneau: "My boy, you've earned the \$5,000 reward offered. You've earned a million dollars!"

Now Royce felt that he understood. Freneau had been coaxed into the Everglades by that \$5,000 lottery prize. He had won it; and it looked as if Freneau were expecting to win Gloria's love in the bargain. For Gloria was simply devouring him with her eyes.

Royce knew little about Freneau, and that little was not to his advantage. Freneau neglected his office but neglected no other duty. He was a love affair. Dr. Royce had come to Palm Beach as the private physician of old Judge Freeman and he had abundant opportunity to see the influence of Freneau on the judge's daughter, Lois.

It was not a whole-some influence. Royce dreaded the look of adoration in Gloria's eyes as they dwelt on Freneau. But what could Royce do? He could not order Mr. Stafford not to pay Freneau the reward. He could not boast of his own deeds. So he kept silence.

On the long ride back to Palm Beach they passed the spot where Gloria had left her brother's racing car in the ocean. They paused to look at it. Several men and a team of mules were struggling to drag it out of the water.

David grew angry and wanted to know what Gloria was going to do about getting him another car. She laughed at that. Her father did not allow her much spending money. She was not buying motor presents with what she got. But when Pierpont saw the big waves sprawling over the car and imagined what danger Gloria had escaped he had not the heart to rebuke Gloria. He said:

"If you'll behave yourself, David, I'll buy you a new car. It's worth a hundred of them to have the child safe."

"You're a very nice dad," said Gloria. "And I promise you I'll never run away in the Everglades or elope with a Seminole again."

But that was no proof that she might not run into just as great danger in so-called civilization.

When they reached the Royal Poinciana, Gloria passed through a throng of welcoming friends, and Freneau received congratulations innumerable. Royce sneaked off to his room and plunged into a hot bath, treated

his wounds as best he could, shaved and put on fresh clothes.

Then he strolled out to order a new evening dress in a hurry from a Palm Beach tailor. He met Freneau, carrying his honors jauntily. Royce went to him and held him skewered with his eyes as he said:

"Look here, Freneau, haven't you a little something to say to me?"

"Why, no, old man; nothing. I know of except that I suppose I ought to feel sorry that you arrived too late. But I can't feel sorry. I didn't even know you were there."

Royce glared at him, then laughed harshly and said:

"The diagnosis in your case is clear. You are hopelessly infected with yellow fever; but you are immune to all honorable sentiments. Don't lose your head, though, and don't try any of your tricks on little Gloria Stafford."

Freneau laughed again, a more ugly laugh, this time. "That seems to be the case," he said. "I'm going to make it mine," said Royce.

Freneau walked away. He would not even give Royce the satisfaction of an excuse for trouncing him. Royce almost smothered with suppressed rage. He had an uppercut in his undisciplined right hand which he was fairly aching to plant on Freneau's jaw—an exact duplicate of the one he had administered to Chief Kalcad.

Pierpont Stafford was overjoyed to have his lost ewe lamb restored to the fold, and he was childishly happy. He realized that after all she was only temporarily his. She had escaped marrying the Seminole, but that did not mean that she would escape marrying somebody.

After Gloria had enjoyed all the redemptive influences of a tub and shampoo and fine linen and a silk frock she found that her interest in Mr. Freneau was as keen as ever. She even felt grateful to Lois Freeman for flirting with David. She was out on the ledge of the veranda and day-dreamed.

When her father sauntered by and asked her what she was up to she answered:

"O, nothing! I'm just basking in the sun."

But when Pierpont came by that way a little later he found Dick Freneau basking in Gloria's most bewitching smile. They were Romeo and Juliet at Palm Beach, separated only by a low wall and clump of rhododendrons. And Romeo was reaching across that with his walking stick.

It was the first time Pierpont had seen his child in a flirtation. He did not like her in that employment. He took her by the ear and led her away. She protested at the indignity.

Pierpont let go her ear. He had always been afraid of her and unable to manage her. He was not afraid of Freneau, however. He went for him at once. He was about to begin with a shout "How dare you speak to my daughter?" He paused, feeling that without Freneau's help he might have had no daughter to be spoken to.

Pierpont was used to accomplishing his ends with the weapon of the check book. He drew the weapon now and a fountain pen and said:

"By the way, there's that reward. It will give me great pleasure to pay it over."

He wrote after "Pay to the order of" the name "Richard Freneau" and the amount "Five thousand and no hundredths dollars—\$5,000." Freneau's fingers twitched to clutch the fortune, but his hand advised him to play for higher stakes. He put away the temptation with a proud smile.

"It is reward enough to have been able to be of service to Miss Stafford," he said.

If Gloria had not adored him before, that chivalrous speech would not have helped her.

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At the railroad station she was not surprised to find Mr. Freneau waiting. She was enraged to have her father break in on her first few words and drag her on the train. She slipped away and came back to finish what she had started. Then the governess appeared and halted her. She stole back down the steps once more, only to have her father storm down after her and carry her off bodily. Then the train started and she had no chance to say the million and a half things a young woman would naturally have to say to her fiancé on leaving him for five years.

Freneau felt a little lonely too when he saw the long train dwindle away northward. He wondered when he would see Gloria again. She was a sweet little thing, in spite of her money. She was prettier than any girl he had ever met. He kept telling himself now—even when he flirted with some other pretty girl—told himself that she was not half so pretty as Gloria. That was his idea



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"I promise," said Freneau, quickly. "From to-morrow," said Gloria, with equal grimness.

"The train leaves very shortly," said Pierpont, and led her in to superintend the packing.

Freneau walked away in a daze. Yesterday he was a broker's clerk. To-day he was the son-in-law of one of the country's wealthiest men.

What was five years to him? He wished that he had accepted that check. Yet, if he had, it would have been a disaster. He would have been a servant—paid off and discharged. Now she and her family were in debt to him—mortgaged to him till he came to collect.

Five years sounded unimportant to Gloria, too, at the moment. She would love that young man forever. He was a small part of a forever, and he was such a wonderful man that she really ought to prepare herself to be worthy of him.

She wished that she might have had one dance with him, however, or one moonlight conversation. She had not had five minutes' chat with him since the rescue. Even the disgust there had been a stupid Indian looking on.

She did not help in the packing with much grace. There was one consolation. Her father was going to send her to school. That meant an escape from her demon governess and those lonely hours of study and recitation. She would have girls of her own age for fellows.

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Gloria was sitting in miserable splendor on a little gold chair in a box like a prison cell to her and she was batting her eyes fast to shake away the tears that came pellmell. She was wringing her little white gloved hands and trying not to sob aloud. "He doesn't remember me! He doesn't remember me!"

new world. She fought her way to the balcony of a basketball team as correct as the president of an American republic. She learned to fence well and to box a little. She even took an interest in some of her text books.

She thought she was very wicked, but she did nothing more vicious than to hold a chafing dish over now and then in her room. And even there some teacher was sure to hear the muffled laughter and walk in sternly and march all the girls to their own rooms. But the severest teachers found it hard to frown into Gloria's smiling eyes.

Many and many a time she told to her breathless girl audiences the bloodiest story of her hair-raising experience in the Everglades and the tremendous glory of her rescuer's valor. The magnitude of Freneau's feat may have grown a little with retelling, but his photograph was always convincing proof to the envious audience.

Gloria had few sorrows of importance beyond the common disappointments of a girl. The chief of her disappointments was her brother's marriage to Lois. She never had liked Lois and had never understood her charm.

Lois had taken little interest in winning the approval of women. She had played a part in winning over David's father, but she could not resist the wealth and prestige of his name. She was bitterly disappointed in him when she learned the truth.

The life of Freneau and the fact that Lois had planned was taken from her. She drifted into the madroom of men and women whose one hunt was pleasure, whose career was killing time. Freneau was Lois's type to a T.

Gloria had a stanch little heart and she kept her word to her father. She kept faith, too, with her fiancé five years removed. She fell into the habit of talking to his photograph. When she was tempted to forget that she was a solemnly betrothed young person, she would find strength in the habit of talking to his photograph.

Unconsciously Lois revenged her husband on Freneau, for while Freneau was causing Lois to forget her duties to the partnership she had ended in a jeweler's window and wondering what Freneau was doing.

He and Mulry in the flush of their early successes had spread out—had taken the branch offices in Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis and Pittsburgh. While the tide set their way these branches served as so many hands to rather in the office of Freneau & Mulry.

It was during this crisis that Gloria marked off the last month of her five years' school. She was ambitious enough to go on and finish her course and get her diploma. She compressed her last year of school into half a year and graduated all alone in mid-winter.

She dashed into her room at college for the last time, with her solemn moribund askew on her head, remembering that she had been a girl for the last time.

She threw her diploma in air and her moribund askew on her head. She whirled off her black robe and began to change into her nightgown, letting her moribund askew fall where it fell. She danced a jig over her scholarly past and made haste to pack her things and dart out to meet her future.

"Freneau" was her selling of "Future." The journey to New York from school was as long as the journey to New York from Palm Beach had been years ago; only then she had been travelling away from her romance, now toward it.

When her father met her at the train she hugged him almost to suffocation, then asked him how dear Mr. Freneau was the last time he saw him.

"The last time I saw dear Mr. Freneau was at Palm Beach," said Pierpont, who had almost forgotten his name and had hoped that Gloria had forgotten it entirely.

As soon as she reached the house on Riverside Drive and embraced the old servants and shook hands with the new Gloria took her father into the library and asked him for Mr. Freneau's telephone number. She had already found "Freneau & Mulry" in the book already, and she said, "Do you suppose that Mr. Mulry's Freneau is my Mr. Freneau?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," Pierpont corrected. "But it wouldn't be very correct to telephone a busy man, would it?"

"I suppose not," Gloria admitted. "Where's a pen? I'll write him."

"How long has it been since you wrote him last?" said Pierpont, anxiously.

"Why, I've never written him at all," Gloria answered, shocked.

Pierpont kissed her brow with a profound pride. Then he ventured to say, "Don't you think it would be better if you waited for him to look you up?"

"At about that time Freneau was just putting down the telephone in his office," Lois had told him. "He said that her husband was taking her to the benefit and she hoped that he would be there. She had something immensely important to tell him. Everything she had to tell him was immensely important nowadays to her—and immensely unimportant to him."

The thing that agitated Lois was her knowledge that Gloria had come back to New York and was still in love with the memory of Freneau. Lois was in an anguish of fear and jealousy and she waited to compel Freneau to swear that he would not forsake her for Gloria.

Freneau was oblivious of this, but he had no intention of keeping his promise to Lois till Mulry, who had overheard Freneau's end of the conversation, said: "Come along. I got stung for a couple of tickets. You can have one of them. We might meet somebody who might give us a line on the market."

So the Romeo and Juliet went with his faithful partner. They haunted the promenade of the box holders, wishing to be seen in expensive company.

Glancing over the balustrade, Freneau caught sight of Lois mounting the stairs with her husband. She was looking for him, and she smiled back at her with stunted grace. He did not notice that on the other stairway the big and angry Pierpont Stafford was coming up with a vision of young lovelessness at his side. He did not see Gloria see him. He did not see her clutch her father's arm and almost swoon with delight.

He might have observed all this and still not have suspected who the girl was, for the Gloria he had found in the gown costume in the Everglades, the Gloria who had waved farewell to him from the reading train five years ago, had not been the same. She had changed. What had happened to her was of a little sixteen-year-old thing with her hair down her back and an air of almost childish innocence.

The Gloria who marched up the broad steps of the Metropolitan was a young lady of twenty-one with her hair up, her head full of knowledge, and her features changed as the bud changes when it becomes a rose. Her costume was the latest thing from Paris, still Paris in spite of the war.

Gloria could hardly climb the steps to the level of Freneau. Her father did not know him, but she did. She left her father's side and hurried to Freneau's. He did not hear her or know that she was there. At last she was alone with her father, and she was crying his name aloud and exclaiming: "Why, hello! I'm so glad you're here!"

He put out his hand, but hers fell away before he could clasp it. She had thrust her arm into her father's elbow and hurried him along toward the door of their box while Freneau whirled and stared.

Mulry stared too and muttered: "Good Lord, who's the new peach with old Pierpont?"

"It must be his daughter; it's Gloria!" Freneau gasped.

"His daughter! Do you know her?" "Know her?" Freneau laughed. "Well,